

2.5 Mega Threads

When addressing sensitive issues, try intensive asynchronous correspondence.

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Suppose you have complex issues with another person that you can't seem to resolve in the usual ways. You've tried talking about them and maybe explored therapy, but the issues remain frustratingly persistent. Whenever you communicate about this, one or both of you gets triggered and stops listening to the other person. In these situations, it might be helpful to take a step back and try switching to a slower medium of communication. Mega Threads—long threads of online communication—can be one such medium.

Utilizing Mega Threads will allow each of you to process your issues in your own time, when you have sufficient resources and are not emotionally triggered. With this technique, there's almost no limit to the depth of your response to a particular issue, so you have quite a lot of room to express yourself fully and to be heard.

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- You can choose a good time to work on sensitive issues, ensuring you are calm and in the right state of mind.
- You can express yourself fully, without the other person interrupting you.
- Each person can write at their own pace and time, bridging gaps in communication styles between partners.
- You can process your triggers on your own time instead of reacting automatically and lashing out.

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- Corresponding about emotional issues can feel difficult or disconnected for some people.
- Fully expressing yourself in this format can be very time- and energy-consuming.
- Slight ambiguities in phrasing can lead to radical misinterpretations.

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To begin, get your partner's agreement to try out this tool—not everyone likes to communicate using huge chunks of text! If they are willing to try it out, establish a common communication channel. Note: This should not be a channel you are already using for other purposes because, as the name suggests, Mega Threads can be quite large and intensive. You don't want the Mega Thread clogging up your other text communications. It's better to open a dedicated group for the two of you on WhatsApp or iMessage, start an email thread, or create a shared Google Doc. Find whatever method works best for you.

To begin, create the Mega Thread by picking one or more topics you want to work on. Take a big breath and start writing about the situation at hand, expressing everything that's on your mind: all your feelings, needs, wants, desires, fears, grudges, and blames. For this to be most effective, it's best to include trigger warnings above any text that might be particularly difficult for your partner to read and/or add statements of love and goodwill. Prefacing especially sensitive sentiments with a disclaimer or reminding your partner that you care can help you be fully heard. At these points, you can ask them to stop reading and breathe before proceeding or explain that you're describing your inner thoughts and voices, which might include parts of yourself that you're not wholly identified with. This can help them get into a more receptive state and allow them to read your words without overreacting.

After you've fully expressed yourself, it's your partner's turn. It's important for them to pick a good time to reply, while they are present and relatively calm and have ample time. They then respond to everything you wrote in a similar manner, explaining their side of the issues. Either after they finish replying to everything or perhaps before they reply, they can add new topics that bother them.

This type of discussion can have a tendency to branch out into other side topics, quickly developing into an extremely large, unwieldy thread. To manage this tendency, it's helpful to identify tricky side topics and file them separately in a backlog, perhaps in Excel or Google Sheets, for later processing. This ensures that the main thread doesn't become too big to handle and simultaneously prevents you from forgetting anything important. After the main thread has subsided, you can pick new topics to process from the backlog.

You can employ Mega Threads in a focused effort to address one specific subject or as an ongoing tool to process issues as they arise. After going back and forth a few times on a topic, hopefully you'll feel at least some relief and mutual understanding.
